

makes sense; the Tommasi article on Perugia brings the book to the cusp of the Reformation and closes the age of the great military orders.

Of the case studies, the most intriguing is Johannes A. Mol's study of "The Hospitaller Sisters in Frisia." The house at Sigena is acknowledged by Luis Garcia-Guijarro Ramos to be one of the best documented and most thoroughly examined of all female Hospitaller houses; conversely, the Frisian houses are relatively unknown outside a small circle of specialists. Mol clearly establishes that the Hospitallers were an active and thriving monastic movement within Frisia and that women were an integral part of that story. He surveys the records of Frisian Hospitaller houses, and notes that at least fourteen of the twenty-one houses had been established by 1300 (p. 179), a remarkable achievement. He also compares their development with that of women in the Teutonic Knights in Frisia, further establishing that the experiences of the women Hospitallers are part of the larger picture of women's monasticism in the later Middle Ages.

All of the articles stress the necessity of royal or high noble patronage for the creation,

maintenance, and, sometimes, dissolution of women's Hospitaller houses. Furthermore, the articles emphasize the challenges faced by women who wanted to enter a male-dominated order. Men ran nearly all of the Hospitaller houses for women, and some were in fact double monasteries.

The book is modestly illustrated; the articles are supplemented with several black and white photographs, a few schematics of convent layouts, maps, and charts of expenses incurred by the Buckland house.

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Charles Beem. *The Lioness Roared: The Problems of Female Rule in English History.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Pp. viii + 271.

The *Lioness Roared* considers the particular challenges English queens faced because of their gender from the twelfth to nineteenth century. In a thoughtful and thorough book developed from his dissertation, Charles Beem explores the ways in which four "female kings" (a

term Beem prefers over “queen” to distinguish between a monarch ruling in her own right versus a consort or one who ruled through kinship) confronted and negotiated limitations to their political power due to the societal expectations placed upon them as women. Through his gender analysis of the reigns of Empress Matilda, Mary I, Anne, and Victoria, Beem shows that, while generally perceived by scholars as relatively unsuccessful, these women were crucial in the development of English kingship.

Beem admirably situates his study both within the fields of women’s studies and political history, exploring these women’s reigns for what they contribute to our understanding of women’s positions and the political situation of the time. While Elizabeth I is often the subject of gender analysis since she is touted as the female English monarch of note, Beem argues that other female rulers, her “less celebrated colleagues” (12), were just as important to the development of English kingship as Gloriana.

With this work, Beem accomplishes an amazing feat. He explains societal expectations for female rulers over a great expanse of time, drawing upon a variety of primary sources while also engaging in wide-

ranging scholarly arguments and deftly handling multiple historiographies. True to his goal, Beem undertakes both political history and gender studies, bringing together two subdisciplines often left apart. Beem adds important depth to his study by not only considering women and questions of femininity, but by being attentive to the role played by men in these queens’ lives as well as to ideas of masculinity.

In his first and strongest chapter, Beem explores the career of the Empress Matilda, daughter of Henry I. In a nuanced manner Beem presents a gender analysis of her short reign with an eye to political history. Being a woman was not Matilda’s main challenge; instead, it was her marriage to Geoffrey of Anjou, unsupported by England’s elite, as well as her lethargy in claiming the throne. After her father died, Stephen rushed to London to claim the throne, in line with precedent, while Matilda remained in Anjou. Therefore, Beem makes the important argument that Matilda faced challenges of a political nature rather than facing a rejection based on her femaleness alone.

Beem also explains that Matilda played a key role in the shift in the authority of queens and

that despite this role, she failed to meet gender expectations for a female ruler of her time. Before Matilda's reign, a "regina" obtained her power through her kin relationships. Yet, Matilda made a bid for the throne in her own right, not as a consort. Therefore, she had to use other titles (e.g. Empress, Lady of the English) in her documents because "regina" did not hold the same weight as did "rex." In this discussion, Beem thoughtfully explores the meanings behind the titles she used. For example, to contemporaries "regina" most often meant consort, while "domina" was a woman who exercised power in her own right. Although Matilda holds a critical place in the trajectory of English kingship, she was criticized by contemporaries for her un-femaleness as she tried to exercise the authority of a king. Matilda's mistake, apparently, was that she attempted to rule like a king, "emulat[ing] male gendered kingship" (54), when her peers and subjects expected a consort queen.

Four hundred years later, Mary Tudor succeeded in ways that Matilda did not. Known by many for an unsuccessful and short reign, Mary was able to occupy the throne and exercise male-gendered kingly authority while outwardly representing herself as a queen

consort. That is, Mary embraced sixteenth-century expectations of womanhood while behind the scenes carrying out the office of king. Beem argues that she navigated these murky waters of female rule in diverse and creative ways, ultimately constructing a model of female kingship that subsequent queens drew upon, including her sister Elizabeth I. Beem points out, as with Matilda, the problem was not whether Mary could rule as a woman; instead, the preoccupation amongst contemporaries was with how she carried out her rule. Instead of being bold and authoritative like Matilda, Mary played the part people would expect of a sixteenth-century woman and queen consort, which was often a complex balancing act: "regal yet gentle" (80), "chaste and modest" (80), and at times acting politically inexperienced and relatively submissive to political advisors. By doing so, at the end of her rule, Beem argues that she was "the initial architect of a model of English gynecocracy" (98).

In 1702, Anne came to the throne as queen. Her sister Mary II had ruled, but the Glorious Settlement settled all real authority on her husband William. Beem argues that by the eighteenth century there had been further evolution

of queenship, particularly in relation to the role of the queen's husband. While Anne's husband, Prince George, is usually not studied, Beem shows that he was important in the development of female kingship because the male consort became insignificant. That in turn strengthened the queen's position as sole monarch. George's lack of agency furthered the "evolution of the autonomous sovereignty of female rule in England" (105).

In his last chapter, Beem enters the modern era by examining one political event from early in Queen Victoria's reign, the Bedchamber Crisis of 1839. Victoria was the next female ruler and in Beem's schematic of kingship she was a monarch who was active and informed in shaping her rule, similar to the other queens of his book. While government had changed in England to a fully constitutional monarchy by her reign, Victoria worked to present herself as king and queen simultaneously while recognizing the gender expectations of her day. The Bedchamber Crisis involved a struggle between the queen and her advisors over the political power of aristocratic women in traditionally non-political posts. In short, Beem argues that while some in her government pushed

Victoria to give these women political power, she resisted in order to maintain her power as monarch.

Beem ends his study with a thought-provoking conclusion, dabbling in a gender analysis of the current reign of Elizabeth II. He suggests both that the Lioness still roars, in that Elizabeth II possesses sole kingly authority, but also that the picture is not entirely rosy because the present queen still bends to expectations of her gender. While this argument is a bit unfair (this reader finds it too narrow a definition of feminism to claim that conforming to gender expectations makes one anti-feminist) and underdeveloped, it provides great potential for class discussion. *The Lioness Roared* would be a fitting text for a British history course for its careful attention to change over time, its discussion of the development of the British monarchy, and Beem's insightful gender analysis.

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